OSCE SAYS TRANSNISTRIANS WERE ‘BUSSED IN' TO VOTE IN MOLDOVA

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Following allegations that vote-buying marred Moldovas February 24 parliamentary elections, the head of the OSCE Mission to Moldova, Claus Neukirch, said its observers had noticed that Moldovan citizens who live in the breakaway Russian-controlled region of Transnistria had been brought to the polls in an organised manner.

Speaking to TVR Moldova on Sunday, he said that there was no evidence that these people were bussed in to vote for one party or another.

But independent media filmed voters in front of polling stations who claimed they had been promised up to 20 US dollars to cast votes.

A political expert, Mihai Isac, told BIRN that people were piled up in buses to come and vote. The transportation was organised centrally from Chisinau and the Sheriff holding, which basically runs the separatist region [of Transnistria].

The countrys ruling parties have so far stayed silent regarding these allegations.

The European Parliament delegation in Chisinau and the US State Department have both said the elections were mainly fair but have urged the authorities to investigate allegations of possible fraud concerning voters in Transnistria.

Moldovas Central Election Commission said after the polls that the elections went ahead without major incidents.

An OSCE report released one day after the elections stressed that while generally the elections were held in a correct framework, but noted allegations of pressure on public employees, strong indications of vote buying and the misuse of state resources.

Around 37,250 Transnistrians voted in the countrys elections for the first time since Moldova gained independence from the Soviet Union in 1991.

Results show they voted mainly for the pro-Russian Socialist Party, PSRM, the ruling Democratic Party, PD, and the Ilan Shor Party, named after and run by the mastermind behind the so-called grand heist of one billion US dollars from the Moldovan banking system.

They also backed some independent candidates who are close to the Ilan Shor Party.

The Socialists came first in the polls, winning over 31 per cent of the vote. The ACUM [NOW] bloc,

came second. Comprising two pro-European parties, the Action and Solidarity Party, PAS, and the Dignity and Truth Platform, PPDA, it won 26.16 per cent of the votes.

The current ruling Democratic Party came third with 24 per cent. The Ilan Shor Party came fourth with 8.44 per cent.

By law, the results have been sent to the Constitutional Court, which has until March 9 to approve or reject the results.

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